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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

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U. S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE
OFFICE OF INFORMATION

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SUBJECT: "More Bees on the Wing" - Information from the Production and Marketing Administration, U.S. Department of Agriculture

ooOoo

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has set for 1946...an 8 percent increase in the number of bee colonies in this country. This is the first time in apiary history...we have set a production goal for bees.

The pressing need is not--as you may think---for more honey or for more beeswax. The need is for more insects to pollinate field crops. For honeybees are the best little pollinators in the insect world. Without their help... about 50 agricultural crops would not set as much seed or produce as much fruit no matter how hard the farmers worked to cultivate and fertilize them and protect them from plants and disease.

Bees are not the only insects that carry pollen from flower to flower. There are also thrips...butterflies...moths...and flies. But these insects act as pollinators only when they're hungry. They quit their pollinating work just as soon as they get a square meal.

But honeybees are different. Spreading pollen is a natural part of their struggle for existence. Remember that old rhyme:

How doth the busy little bee
  Improve each shining hour,
And gather honey all the day
  From every opening flower!

Well there's no question about the bee's industry. A colony needs between 300 and 400 pounds of honey and 50 to 80 pounds of pollen...to meet the year's food requirements. But a colony usually produces from 50 to 200 pounds of honey more than it needs.

-more-

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The nice thing about the honeybee is that---to some extent---we can control its numbers and its location.

The unfortunate thing is that there has been a decline in the honeybee population in recent years. We can blame a number of farm practices. Dusting for one. Dusting has no respect for boundaries or crops and it has been responsible for a heavy toll of insect mortality.

Something else in this country...we're using more insecticides to control injurious insects. And many honeybees have been poisoned by these insecticides. In addition....our practices of rotating crops and cultivating the soil intensively have destroyed the natural homes and breeding places of wild bees.

All of these have cut down on our honeybee population. And that's why the U.S. Department of Agriculture has set for 1946 an 8 percent increase in the number of bee colonies in this country.

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